

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 231035Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1007

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 06186

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, US, UK, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: UK VIEWS ON COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN ITALIAN
GOVERNMENT - THE SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH CROSLAND

1. IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAS BEEN
ENGAGED IN AN INTENSIVE REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION
IN ITALY AND CONTINGENCIES ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATION
OF COMMUNISTS IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. THIS REVIEW WAS
STIMULATED BY THREE FACTORS: (1) FREQUENT WARNINGS BY
THE U.S. THAT SUCH AN EVENTUALITY WOULD MARK A WATERSHED
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN SECURITY AND TRANSATLANTIC
RELATIONS AND PRESAGE A SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WHICH WOULD

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TEMPT OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO MOVE IN THE SAME

DIRECTION; (2) THE GROWING POSSIBILITY OF ITALIAN ELECTIONS AS EARLY AS MID-JUNE AND (3) THE NEED TO PREPARE GUIDANCE FOR NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY CROSLAND'S USE DURING DISCUSSIONS AT THE MAY NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING.

2. ALTHOUGH REVIEW IS STILL IN PROGRESS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN SUBMITTED TO MINISTERS' MAIN THEMES HAVE EMERGED WHICH, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, ARE UNLIKELY TO CHANGE. AND MAY BE REFLECTED IN THE SECRETARY'S SATURDAY MEETING WITH CROSLAND. WE SAY MAY BECAUSE FRANKLY WE DON'T KNOW WHAT CROSLAND'S VIEWS ARE ON THIS ISSUE.

3. BRITISH OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN GOI IS NOT INEVITABLE. BUT IF SUCH DID OCCUR. IN THE UK VIEW IT WOULD CLEARLY BE A SERIOUS REVERSE FOR NATO' EUROPE AND THE WEST. THERE IS LITTLE DISPOSITION IN UPPER REACHES OF WHITEHALL TO ACCEPT AIRILY THAT THE ITALIAN MARXIST-LENINIST WOLF HAS METAMORPHOSED INTO SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LAMB. THEREFORE, HMG PREFERENCE WOULD BE TO POSTPONE ENTRANCE OF COMMUNISTS INTO GOI FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE IN HOPE THAT IT COULD EVENTUALLY BE FORESTALLED ALTOGETHER. ALTHOUGH THEY DESPAIR AT INEPTITUDE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, BRITISH GATHER SOME HOPE THAT WORST CASE MAY BE AVOIDED IN NEAR TERM FROM HYPOTHESIS THAT ITALIAN COMMUNISTS MAY THEMSELVES PREFER TO DEFER THEIR HISTORIC MOMENT FOR SOME WHILE LONGER BECAUSE THEY FEAR, IN ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH. BOTH AN ECONOMIC EARTHQUAKE CAUSED BY A FLIGHT FROM THE LIRA AND A MILITARY COUP FROM THE RIGHT. NONETHELESS, IF PCI GARNERS HIGHEST VOTE IN ELECTION. BRITISH WORRY THAT POPULAR FORCE OF THAT ELECTORAL EXPRESSION MIGHT MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR COMMUNISTS TO REMAIN OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT.

4. IN ANY EVENT, BRITISH ARE CONVINCED THAT THE ALLIES CAN HAVE ONLY A MARGINAL INFLUENCE ON THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION IN ITALY. AND. THAT BEING THE CASE, THE WEST OUGHT TO BE QUITE CAREFUL IN INVESTING PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNISTS IN GOI WITH DOOMSDAY IMPORTANCE, BOTH BECAUSE

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IT MAY WELL HAPPEN AND BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO TO PREVENT IT. FURTHER, SO THE ARGUMENT GOES, THE U.S. UNFORTUNATELY POSSESSES FLAWED VOICE -- BECAUSE OF LOCKHEED AND CIA -- WITH WHICH TO OFFER ADVICE TO THE ITALIANS ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL FUTURE. BRITISH SAY UNFORTUNATELY. BECAUSE THEY SHARE U.S. PERCEPTION THAT HISTORIC COMPROMISE IS APTLY NAMED AND THAT. SHOULD COMMUNISTS COME INTO THE GOVERNMENT, ITALY WOULD BE

PULLING HARD AT ITS ROOTS IN THE WEST. ALL THE SAME.
BRITISH HEAD FOR COVER WHEN LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF
CONCERNS STATED ABOVE IS DRAWN: THAT IS. THAT
EUROPEANS -- INCLUDING UK -- SHOULD THEMSELVES VIGOROUSLY
SOEAK OUT, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY. ON DANGER OF
ITALIANS PROPELLING THEMSELVES OVER PRECIPICE. PERHAPS

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O R 231035Z APR 76

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1008

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AS EARLY AS JUNE. SUCH SUGGESTIONS FOR EUROPEAN ACTIVISM
USUALLY BRING SHRUGS AND FAMILIAR VERSES
ABOUT LACK OF CONSENSUS AMONG THE EIGHT. FAILURE OF
POLITICAL WILL. PROBLEMS OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION. AND

THE LIKE. SO. ALTHOUGH UK FUNDAMENTALLY AGREES WITH CENTRAL U.S. SECURITY MESSAGE CONCERNING CURRENT DANGERS REGARDING ITALY. IF U.S. HALTED ITS WARNINGS, BRITISH GUESS THERE WOULD BE NO VOLUNTEERS IN THE EC TO RING THE DANGER BELL.

5. HMG HAS MUCH LESS SYMPATHY WITH U.S. ASSERTIONS THAT DOMINO THEORY OR "MULTIPLIER EFFECT" IN REST OF WESTERN EUROPE MIGHT FOLLOW COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN GOI. NOT SECRET

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ONLY DO BRITISH QUESTION THE INEVITABILITY OR EVEN PROBABILITY OF SUCH A UNIFORM EVOLUTION. THEY SAY THAT EVEN IF IT WERE TRUE, IT WOULD BE TACTICALLY UNWISE TO PREDICT IT PUBLICLY. THIS IS BOTH BECAUSE IT BLURS THE CENTRAL SECURITY MESSAGE WHICH SHOULD BE UNAMBIGUOUSLY GOTTEN ACROSS TO THE ITALIAN VOTER AND THE REST OF EUROPE NOW ABOUT ITALY'S FUTURE, A MESSAGE BRITISH OFFICIALS ACCEPT AS UNASSAILABLE IN ITS LOGIC; AND BECAUSE IT IS UNWISE TO INFLATE THROUGH PUBLIC STATEMENTS A SERIOUS, BUT BARELY MANAGEABLE. SETBACK WE MAY BE UNABLE TO INFLUENCE OR AVOID INTO A MAJOR DISASTER FOR THE ALLIANCE. AND ESPECIALLY THE UNITED STATES. FINALLY FCO AND MOD ARE HORRIFIED BY U.S. STATEMENTS THAT COMMUNISTS IN GOI WOULD BE FIRST MOVEMENT IN DISCORDANT SYMPHONY WHICH WOULD END IN WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM EUROPE.

6. THIS BRINGS US TO BRITISH CONCERNS ABOUT THE U.S. RESPONSE SHOULD OUR CURRENT NIGHTMARES BECOME A ROMAN REALITY. AS EMPHASIZED ABOVE, BRITISH VERY MUCH SHARE OUR APPREHENSION OF THE IMPACT OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE GOI ON WESTERN SECURITY AND ON NATO. THEY BELIEVE THIS TO BE THE CASE WHATEVER CABINET POSITIONS THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT HOLD AND, IN ANY EVENT. THINK IT UNLIKELY PCI WOULD WISH TO FACE EXTERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF ACQUIRING EITHER THE DEFENSE OR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO. IN UK EYES. DEALING WITH SUCH A GOVERNMENT IN NATO WOULD BE DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS FOR THREE REASONS: (1) ITALY WOULD DEFINITIONALLY BE A LESS RELIABLE ALLY. ESPECIALLY IN CRISES; (2) THE GOI, BECAUSE OF THE TRADITIONAL AND VIRULENT ANTI-AMERICANISM OF THE PCI WOULD INEVITABLY, OVER TIME, ADOPT WITHIN NATO COUNCILS POSITIONS ANTITHETICAL TO U.S. OBJECTIVES; AND (3) THE BRITISH PRESUME THAT EVEN IF PCI DOES NOT HOLD MAJOR MINISTRIES, THEIR VERY PRESENCE IN GOI WILL MEAN THAT NATO WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY LEAKIER THAN BEFORE. BECAUSE OF THIS. HMG WILL PROBABLY ACCEPT THAT ITALY WOULD HAVE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM NPG AND PERHAPS FROM MBFR DELIBERATIONS. PREFERABLY AT THE INSTANCE OF THE

EUROPEANS. FINALLY SUCH AN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD
HAVE TO REMAIN UNDER THE CLOSEST ALLIED SCRUTINY FOR THE
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SLIGHTEST SIGN THAT JEKYLL WAS BECOMING HYDE, IN BRUSSELS
OR AT HOME.

7. BUT EVEN WITH THIS PERCEPTION THAT SUCH AN EVENTUAL-
ITY WOULD BE EXTRAORDINARILY TRYING FOR NATO, THE
BRITISH SEE THE ALTERNATIVE OF ATTEMPTING DRAMATICALLY
TO ISOLATE OR EVEN TO EXPELL ITALY AS MUCH WORSE.
ISOLATION WITHIN NATO WOULD GRATUITOUSLY
GIVE THE PCI AN OPEN DOOR THROUGH WHICH TO LEAD ITALY

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OUT OF THE ALLIANCE. EXPULSION. IF SUCCESSFUL, WOULD REMOVE ITALY FROM SAFETY OF THE ALLIANCE UMBRELLA AND OPEN IT TO SOVIET POLITICAL INTERVENTION. IT WOULD ALSO IMMEASURABLY ADD TO THE DESTABILIZATION OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN FLANK OF NATO AND MAKE IT MUCH EASIER FOR THE SOVIETS TO INTERFERE DIRECTLY IN YUGOSLOVIA IN THE PERIOD AFTER TITO'S DEMISE.

8. THUS. WITH THIS VIEW. THE BRITISH ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT THE U.S. WILL DO IF THE WORST CASE SCENARIO IN ITALY EVOLVES. THEY DO NOT WISH THIS MATTER TO DEVELOP, UNDER AMERICAN PRESSURE, INTO A SITUATION WHERE THE EUROPEANS ARE FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE
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U.S. AND ITALY. IN THAT EVENT EUROPE WOULD RELUCTANTLY, BUT IN THE END CERTAINLY. CHOOSE THE U.S.. BUT WITH INEVITABLY OOOOSONOUS AFTEREFFECTS REMINISCENT OF 1973-74 FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS.

9. IN SUM. BRITISH BELIEVE THAT ALTHOUGH IT SHOULD BE AVOIDED IF POSSIBLE, WE MAY HAVE TO FACE REALITY OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THUS ITS DAMAGING IMPACT ON NATO, THAT THIS SITUATION WOULD BE DIFFICULT AND MAYBE WORSE FOR WESTERN INTERESTS; BUT THAT IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF DEALING WITH ITALY WITHIN THAN WITHOUT THE ALLIANCE; AND MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE MUST NOT ALLOW COMMUNIST SUCCESS IN ITALY -- BAD AS THAT WOULD BE -- TO BECOME A KNIFE WHICH CUTS A STILL STRONG TRANSATLANTIC CORD.

ARMSTRONG

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